

Manning makes quick impact at Platteville

Written by Jim Ecker

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Jake Manning finished his final exams at Wisconsin-Platteville on Wednesday, glad that was over. He then practiced with the basketball team for the last time before Christmas on Thursday and returned home to Cedar Rapids for a short vacation.

Then he took a nice, long nap.

"It was good," he said after waking up. "I needed it."

Manning, a pre-engineering student, had a busy and productive semester at Platteville as a true freshman. He did well in chemistry, calculus and his other classes and made an immediate impact on the basketball squad.

Manning, a 6-foot-6 forward from Kennedy High School, has started all 11 games for the Pioneers and leads the team in rebounding with 5.8 per game. He's averaging 9.5 points, which ranks fourth on the club, and is shooting 50 percent from the field.

Wisconsin-Platteville is 7-4 overall heading into a tournament in Ohio on Wednesday and has a 2-2 mark in the Wisconsin Intercollegiate Athletic Conference, a premier NCAA Division III league.

Manning is delighted to be in the starting lineup and making a major contribution as a rookie. Coach Jeff Gard put him right on the floor when the season began, without much warning.

"I was very surprised, actually," he said. "I figured I would be a Scout Team player. I wasn't expecting a lot, so it's been awesome."

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Manning posted a big double-double with 19 points and 12 rebounds against Wisconsin Lutheran. He scored 17 points against North Park and collected 12 rebounds against Wisconsin-Eau Claire.

"Beyond every one of those stats is your team," he said modestly.

Manning said Wisconsin-Platteville runs the Swing Offense, the same system used by Bo Ryan at the University of Wisconsin. That makes sense, because Ryan won four NCAA Division III national titles during his 15 years as the head coach at Platteville.

The playing surface at Williams Fieldhouse in Platteville is named the Bo Ryan Court in his honor. "We learned from the best - Bo Ryan," Manning said proudly.

Manning likes the Swing Offense, because if you make your cuts and get open a teammate will get you the ball. As far as rebounding, he attributes his success to having the right approach and being in the right spot.

"A lot of it is having the mentality to go get the ball and go rebound it," he said. "A lot of times rebounding is just 'go get the ball.' Whoever wants it more gets it."

Manning had a busy semester this fall with strenuous preseason workouts, 11 games in a short period of time and a demanding schedule of classes that began at 8 or 9 in the morning. He expects the winter semester to be even harder.

"I'm taking tougher classes and have an 8 o'clock class five days a week. I'm not looking forward to it," he said with a nervous laugh.

Manning averaged 12.4 points and 6.5 rebounds at Kennedy last season as a senior, so his

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averages of 9.5 points and 5.8 rebounds at Platteville are not far off despite the stiffer competition.

"Everybody was the best player on their team at one point, so the competition is a lot higher," he said of college basketball. "In high school you were able to turn and shoot over somebody in the post, but in college they can block your shot, so you have to be a lot more creative offensively.

"Defensively, you can't ever take a possession off or you're going to get scored on."

He seems to have learned in a hurry.